

HOW I TESTED THE "P.N.E.U." METHOD

THE PRINCIPLES OF CHARLOTTE MASON APPLIED IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By UNITA MARSHALL-JACKMAN.

In this article an assistant mistress in a London elementary school sets down for the benefit of other teachers her experience of the method of teaching adopted with complete success by Miss Charlotte Mason, and now sponsored by the Parents' National Educational Union. Our readers will have noticed the remarkable spread of interest in this movement, an interest which will be further increased by the sympathetic references to the P.N.E.U. method in the Report on the Teaching of English in London.

SIX months ago my head mistress introduced "The Parents' National Educational Union" method into our school. The result of two terms' work since taking the Ambleside programmes has been so pleasing that I should like to encourage any teachers who may be hesitating before adopting them. I teach in the girls' department in a large L.C.C. school, situated in a poor district. The parents take little interest in the education of their children, regarding the school as a nursery, where their offspring will be out of the way for a few hours every day. The school is built close to a main-line railway. Very often the teacher's voice becomes inaudible, while shunting operations are carried on, for as long as fifteen minutes. The classes are large, the cloak-rooms small, ill-lit and totally inadequate for the accommodation. It will be seen that it is not a model school, neither are the surroundings model. The difficulties are many, the low mentality of the children not being the least.

The P.N.E.U. method was explained by our head mistress, and we took the plunge, not without many forebodings. I am confining these notes to personal experience in my own class.

1. Making the Venture.

During this period I have taken Standard III. I have fifty on the roll, and fortunately no promotions have taken place. "The Christmas Card" was first read, and with evident enjoyment. The children frequently proclaimed their delight, and at the close of the lessons sight was visible. Not a few bought a copy of the book for themselves in The Readers' Library edition. I ascertained afterwards that in some cases the new purchase was the only book in the house. Cigarette cards showing Dickens' characters were collected zealously. Soon they were familiar not only with the titles but with characters from Dickens' other works. As we were venturing on new ground, I read the book, while the children followed with their own copies. No explanations were given. Each passage consisting of about three pages was read once only, and narrated back immediately. At first only four children volunteered to do anything, but after two months practically the whole class was anxious to "tell back" something, while a few gave short dramatic recitations about the adventures of Scrooge.

As no definite spelling lessons are taken, it was with great trepidation that I gave a test on the words in the book. The result was surprising; many children knew the hardest words, and even the dullest had learnt far more than I expected.

2. Get a Great Surprise.

We finished the book about a month before the examination, and now I experienced another aspect of the method. Not only was the pupils' mind looked forward to the examination with misgiving. Would they remember anything? The alternative questions set at the examination were: "Describe the Cratchits' Christmas dinner" or "Describe the character of Scrooge." The looks of satisfaction on their faces while writing the answers were enough to show that they had remembered the story. Three months previously, when I had been given the book

to take, I felt it was absurd to make such young children read Dickens, but at the end of the term I had realised what Charlotte Mason's method could do for children, even of low mental stature. *Pilgrim's Progress* was enjoyed, and narrated well from the first. The stories read from *A Child's Book of Saints* were listened to with interest and told dramatically. The least successful book was Charlotte Yonge's *Book of Golden Deeds*.

This term we have read *Pickwick Papers* and *Joan of Arc*, by Andrew Lang. The narration has been good, the humour in *Pickwick Papers* enjoyed, and all have adopted Joan as a friend. A further advance was made at this stage by the children reading the allotted pages themselves and then narrating the contents. The spelling was well up to standard.

Getting to Like Poetry.

Poetry is read for half an hour every day, each girl having her own anthology. Reed Moorhouse's *Ring of Words*, Part III, I have noticed particularly that the children take out their poetry books to read whenever opportunity occurs. With very little encouragement they learnt many poems voluntarily, besides 30 chosen by myself. They were not confined in their choice to their anthology. Although so young, they seemed to appreciate "The West Wind" as much as A. A. Milne's delightful "King's Breakfast." Lately I have noticed the children assimilating the language of the poets into their own vocabularies, and some are quite apt at quotation. In a composition on "My Treasures" one of my girls wrote: "My greatest treasures are the poems in my head." The children readily "tell back" the stories or ideas contained in the poems.

The interpretation of the poems in drawing met with little success for a considerable period. I have known children draw a picture illustrating Keats' "Meg Merrilles" without any sign of a gipsy. I was nearly in despair until I caused them to express in pastel William Canton's delicate little lyric called "Carol." They drew the whole scene in detail even to the "golden rose" dropping from heaven. Since then the poems have been illustrated with intelligence and spoken with more feeling and understanding.

3. A Frightful Dance.

I had felt for some time that in order to appreciate poetry fully the girls should be encouraged to interpret the poems in dancing, the poetry of motion. My first attempt was not at all successful. We read Wordsworth's "Daffodils" and apparently appreciated it. I then took them into the hall, and having put Macdowell's "To Wild Rose" on the gramophone, requested a dance about the poem. About thirty looked at me and remained rooted to the spot, while the rest executed a few frightened skips. I realised that it was necessary for me to interpret a few poems in dancing with them. We worked together on Honor F. Lees's "Spring Morning" and made up a dance to Schubert's "Moments Musicaux." I am inclined to think, from the attempts made, that the girls will soon readily interpret any lyrics in dancing. Once they are able to express their appreciation of poems in dancing and in drawing, their understanding of poetry is assured.

Very little time has been given to the actual composing of poetry, and such work as has been done has not been a success. Definite lessons in reading aloud are not given, being assumed that a girl who understands what she is reading about will naturally enunciate intelligently. Occasionally I heard some of the dullest girls read and found a marked improvement from last year, when I strove merely for mechanical correctness. While they have been reading "for information," mechanical correctness has crept in.

Nature Study Comes Alive.

Nature study under this system has been an ever increasing source of enjoyment. Readings from "Riverside Rambles" and "Beasts Shown to the Children" have been well narrated. They have eagerly drawn and modelled the animals and fish read about.

One lesson a week is devoted to the sketching of various nature specimens in season. In this work I found the fortnightly botany box supplied by the L.C.C. of infinite value. The children look forward to seeing the new specimens, and are very delighted when they discover one already known.

I started "Picture Study," an essentially P.N.E.U. subject, with many misgivings. I frankly knew nothing about Art, and was not interested. During a previous visit to Paris I had walked through the Louvre in ten minutes. My headmistress started the series with William Holman Hunt's "Finding of the Saviour in the Temple." As the term wore on I felt both my interest, and that of the children, increasing. The examination question on picture study was fairly well written considering the age of the children. This term both the children and myself have thoroughly enjoyed painting the pictures painted by Dirk Bouts. The children have attempted to reproduce the pictures in plasticine and in drawing.

4. I Meet My Waterloo.

It is in Writing that I have met my "Waterloo," especially when inspectors do not appreciate the difficulties under which work of this character is carried on. The result in this subject has been appalling. Sometimes the written answers have been almost illegible. Probably this is a result of overpressure, the children being compelled to write too much in too short a period. For five months, through a misunderstanding, no formal writing lessons were given. Latey a poetry copy has been written every week, and answers have been done orally instead of on paper. There has been a slight improvement which raises a hope that time will cure even this defect.

The history results have been excellent in every respect. "Our Island Story" is the book used, being a delightful introduction to the study of English history. Competition to "tell each" has been very keen. The lessons devoted to history periods has been an excellent way of adding to their store of general knowledge. An equally keen interest has been shown in Roman history.

I have not found the teaching of geography under the method so successful as other subjects, probably because we have not worked from the Ambleside books.

Grouping Successful.

About two months ago I started grouping the children for various subjects and have found it successful. Although so young, they are beginning to work quite well alone, and I have more time for individual attention. For certain subjects, such as history, the class is divided into four or eight groups, each under a group leader. The children work surprising well for their leaders. The latter keep a record of the narrations, and any case of inattention or inability to answer is immediately reported.

5. I Am Convinced.

After working the method for two terms I feel that the intelligence of the class has considerably improved, and the interest in the work increased enormously. I have frequently said that the method is excellent for bright children, but leaves the dull ones for ever in the mire. Last summer I agreed with this view; at Christmas I felt from my own experience it was incorrect. My dull girls have progressed beyond my expectations. They get interested in one subject, feel they are of some good in the class, and then have gained confidence, forge ahead.

THE P.N.E.U. METHOD:

An Investigation.

By MARSHALL JACKMAN.

A'BUSMAN'S holiday some people would call it. When the Editor proposed to me to undertake this investigation I readily accepted, and with much pleasure. The task appealed to me. As a teacher I was always somewhat prone to try educational experiments, and, as an inspector, new teaching methods always commanded my interest and sympathy. The Parents' National Educational Union (P.N.E.U.) methods, however, were only known to me as a reader; never, in the whole of my long educational experience, more than fifty years in the schools, had I come into personal contact with them. I have been familiar with most educational methods in operation in Elementary Schools. I have had experience of the many changes which have taken place in teaching methods during the educational eras ushered in by the Acts of 1870 and 1902, ranging from mass teaching by simultaneous monotonous repetition to that of individual work under private study conditions, now more or less common in Elementary Schools. Here was a chance of seeing something new.

The exact task allotted to me by the Editor was to investigate P.N.E.U. methods and write a balanced view of this method of instruction, applied to Elementary Schools. Through influence of Mr. W. Household, the Education Secretary for Gloucestershire, P.N.E.U. methods have undoubtedly a greater vogue among Elementary Schools in that county than in any other part of England; it was to Gloucestershire, therefore, I turned my face. I communicated with Mr. Household, explained to him my object, and asked permission to visit the schools. I received from him every encouragement. A list of Elementary Schools in the county in which P.N.E.U. methods were in operation was supplied, and in these schools I spent a delightful time. I was welcomed by all; nothing could have been kinder than the reception I got from everyone. I shall always retain pleasant recollections of my visit to those Gloucestershire schools, and of the children and teachers I met.

Photo: F. Holleyer



CHARLOTTE MASON. *[From the painting by F. Yates]*

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The P.N.E.U. and Its Activities.

Before I describe my impressions, I think it may be useful and interesting to my readers for me to say a few words about the P.N.E.U. and its activities, and also outline briefly the main features of the scheme. The P.N.E.U. was founded by Charlotte Mason, but, unlike other great educators who have created and introduced new teaching methods, she never would allow her system to be associated with her name. No one can read about her life, or study her educational works, without being seized with the conviction that she was an educational force. She was certainly inspiration to all who came into contact with her. The sufficient tributes paid to her, when she passed away in 1919, are striking evidence of her influence. It is not possible to give more than two or three extracts from these. Axel Sadel said of her: ". . . Charlotte Mason . . . and the culture of the home school at its best." Mr. Fisher wrote: ". . . in truth an artistic people,

though we are shy of acknowledging it . . . and that great educator, Miss Charlotte Mason, whose death we are now deplored, has shown us how readily English children respond to the appeal of the masterpieces of English literature." Sir Clifford Allbutt says: "She was no bureaucrat; her practice was as various and elastic as her principles were constant; there was the method and even the letter, but above all the spirit." That she inspired those with whom she came in contact is exemplified in the tribute paid to her memory by Mr. Household, and in the enthusiastic manner with which he, a recent convert, presses the P.N.E.U. methods on all who come within his sphere of influence. In most affectionate terms he speaks of his idolised teacher: "Our teacher and leader is gone from us. For a moment we look back to gather up the memories that

are to be our inspiration for the future. . . . She has taught us what to do. The rest is our task. We shall go forward, for she leads us still. I never saw her until the summer of 1919. Not until the end of 1917 (I say it to my shame) had I knowledge of her work. There were three short visits to Ambleside, one of them most brief . . . and an hour one afternoon at Gloucester." In describing her, he says: "When she talked with you, she brought out the best that was in you . . . she expected much of you, more sometimes than you knew that you had to give. But, as always, she was right; you had it and you gave, and, of course, gained by giving. Her criticism left no sting. She could not be anything but generous, and the ways of her mind were wide. So she did not make you feel small or foolish. You did not bite your lip or flush with vexation. She lifted and she inspired. She did not drive; she led, and you went with her by happy choice. . . . It is not yet time to measure her whole achievement. The harvest is not yet . . . posterity will see in her a great reformer, who led her children of the nation out of a barren wilderness into a rich inheritance. . . . The children of many generations will thank God for Charlotte Mason and her work."

That such a tribute could be written after an acquaintance of less than three years, and with the personal influence of four brief visits, is undoubtedly striking evidence of the magnetic power Charlotte Mason possessed to inspire all, with whom she came into contact. Mr. Household's enthusiasm for P.N.E.U. methods does not dim with age; it appears to be as strong to-day as it was in 1923, when he wrote his tribute in the early days of his conversion. It bubbled forth so much in his presidential address at the P.N.E.U. Conference, last month at Cirencester, that even *Punch* was constrained to burst into poetry at the ecstasy of Mr. Household's description of the wonders performed by P.N.E.U. methods. *Punch*, in his inimitable manner, wots a typical "punch" poem, which appeared in the issue of May 18, concluding with the following lines:

"Alas! as to these 'Household' words I bark
How deeply I deplore my stunted youth
When the old regimen, severe and stark,
Denied the natural craving of my tooth
For sweetness, etc. all lessons were a lark,
And public bodies recognised the truth
That then, and there alone, will progress hum
When children rule and dominies are dumb."

P.N.E.U. in Gloucestershire.

With such a new-born enthusiast as Secretary to the Education Committee, is it any wonder that rapid progress has been made in Gloucestershire schools in the adoption of the P.N.E.U. methods, the "pneumatic" method, as it is now jokingly called by many in the county? Mr. Household says: "There are 420 Elementary Schools in Gloucestershire having adopted the P.N.E.U. methods. It must not be inferred that all these schools are P.N.E.U. Schools. I have not yet seen a school in which P.N.E.U. methods have been adopted in anything like their entirety. Under present conditions, so far as Elementary Schools are concerned, such a school is impossible. This, however, is anticipating a part of the story I have to tell. In passing, I may say, however, that some of the deviations from P.N.E.U. methods and syllabuses have been introduced by practical teachers, and, in my opinion, are improvements on the original. Further, they are modifications which, if Sir Clifford Allbutt's and other opinions of Charlotte Mason are reliable, would be approved here—but, above all, the spirit." It is there!

Charlotte Mason.

Charlotte Mason was born on January 1, 1842. She had a good education. Owing to changes in family circumstances, it became necessary for her to take up some profession or occupation. She was drawn to teaching. After service in several schools, she decided to seek professional training. She entered the Home and Colonial College to train as a teacher in an Elementary School. Subsequently she took charge of a Church School at Worthing, where, it is understood, she scored considerable success. From Worthing she joined a friend of hers, Miss Trevor, on the staff of the Bishop Otter Memorial College, Chichester, which had just been opened as a Training College for Elementary School teachers. Miss Trevor had been appointed principal, and Miss Mason lecturer on Education and Human Physiology. It will be seen that Miss Mason's professional training and early teaching experience were in connection with Elementary Schools. I mention these facts (i) because Elementary school teachers are honoured that one from their ranks could have risen to such eminence, and (ii) because there appears to be some confusion of thought with regard to the professional training of Miss Mason. For instance, Mr. H. A. Richards, Chief Inspector, Board of Education, in his tribute to Miss Mason, referring to a paper written by her, but read at the Memorial Conference by the Headmaster of Westminster School, said: "It may strike us as a curious fact that the Headmaster of Westminster, one of the leaders of a great profession, should become a willing disciple of one who was not a professional teacher at all. The reason is, I think, that Miss Mason, from her own powers of head and heart, saw some of the obvious truths which we professional people are often slow to see."

Miss Mason at Bradford.

From Chichester College Miss Mason went to a school in Bradford. Here she began the great work of her life—Education in the Home School. This work, apparently, was entered upon quite incidentally. A church, in Bradford, with which Miss Mason was connected required funds. Instead of giving money, Miss Mason offered to raise funds by giving a course of lectures. This course was for ladies, to assist them in the home education of their children. The lectures were afterwards published under the title of "Home Education," and really form the basis of Miss Mason's Vol. I of her "Home Education Series." Two important events in connection with Miss Mason's future work resulted from these lectures. One was the formation of a Parent Education Union in Bradford, in connection with which Miss Mason drew up the first syllabus of work for the home school. We are told by Miss E. Kitching, the Director of the Parents' Union School, in connection with this syllabus, that the central principles and the objects are there almost intact, and the syllabus contains in germs almost every detail of the work as now carried on. The other event was that the publication of the Bradford lectures led to their being read by the Countess of Aberdeen, who was so interested that she sought out Miss Mason. She says in her tribute: "I first came into personal touch with Miss Charlotte Mason through reading her book, 'Home Education.' I was then a young mother, with four children.

the eldest of whom was seven, and Miss Mason's exposition of her ideas of what Home Education might be, was an invitation to me." The result of this interview was that Lord and Lady Aberdeen became joint Presidents of the Parents' National Educational Union, which was launched at a drawing-room meeting in Grosvenor-square in 1887. The Bradford local P.E.U. was merged into the National. Soon after this, Miss Mason left Bradford for Ambleside in order to assist a friend who had taken over a private school there. There was commenced the scheme which ultimately blossomed into the House of Education. First the Parents' Union School was established, which was afterwards used as a practising school for the new training college for governesses. This was started in a small house with four students only. Since its inception, up to the time of the death of Charlotte Mason, the college had trained, under her direct supervision, no less than 400 students, although in the later years of her life Miss Mason was confirmed invalid, she, with stoic determination, plodded on, never relinquishing her hold on the work. She had wonderful vitality. From the invalid's couch she directed and controlled until within four days of her death, which took place in 1923. She passed away in her sleep on January 16 at the age of 81.

The Scheme Develops.

The year 1891 saw a further development of the scheme, and one which affects the investigation I have undertaken. A request came from some parents and some teachers for schools to be admitted to the P.N.E.U. scheme. To this, in the *Parents' Review*, Miss Mason replied: "We have been asked to admit schools as well as families to the P.E.U., and we see no reason why not." Thus the P.N.E.U. methods and programmes of work were made available for schools with apparently no change, although, originally, they had been drawn up for a small group of pupils taught at home by a mother or a governess. In 1923 there were 117 Secondary Schools and 175 Elementary Schools admitted, of which 103 of the latter were in Gloucestershire. Probably most of the Secondary Schools were Private or Preparatory Schools. It is estimated that in 1923 40,000 pupils were being educated in these schools on the P.N.E.U. plan.

Miss Mason's Verdict.

For teachers not working under the P.N.E.U. scheme the results claimed for it by Miss Mason will be interesting reading. I have tabulated a few of them. I give them in Miss Mason's own words, as presented to the P.N.E.U. Conference in 1922, a year before her death. She said: "Joy reigns in all our schoolrooms; every lesson satisfies the mind hunger proper to children; they are quite happy and contented, and Satan finds less mischief for idle minds to think." "Children trained under P.N.E.U. methods possess the practice of absolute attention." . . . "Absence of self-consciousness, self-conceit, vanity, display, has been noticed in those who are simply average P.N.E.U. children." "There is no limit to what these incredible children can do." . . . "There is a singleness of purpose and motive about them which augurs well for their future as citizens." . . . "No secondary motive, marks, prizes, place or title, is required; children work with joy for the pure love of knowledge." . . . "P.N.E.U. children, besides their family traits, exhibit a certain hall-mark by which they may be known, a mark composed of many markings" . . . "The children always pay absolute attention, nothing need ever be repeated, no former work is revised; they are always progressing, never retracing their steps, never going round and round like a horse in a mill."

Other Methods.

On the other hand, Miss Mason is very strong in her condemnation of all other forms of school regimes. She said: "Our education in all classes of society has become mechanical, with only little interest of interest . . . people, all the people, are educated up to a certain point, but are not, as they would say themselves, 'the better of it'." Training Colleges, she considered, failed to train teachers properly. Elementary School education came in for severe condemnation. Probably Miss Mason based her opinion on these points largely on a comparison with her own experiences when working in Elementary Schools and in the Training College for Elementary School teachers. It must be remembered that she worked in Elementary Schools in the 'eighties, when the schools were under the vicious system of "payment by results," based on an individual examination of the pupils. The Oral Lesson, the dependence upon apparatus and illustrative appliances, the use of School Readers, all come in for adverse criticism. The Oral Lesson at its worst is poor twaddle, at its best is far below the ordered treatment of the same subject by an original mind in the right book; apparatus and illustrative appliances have a paralysing effect on the mind; School Readers cannot have the value of consecutive works. Her explanation of the reason for condemning School Readers is a proof of my

view. "The reason for condemning School Readers is that they are out-of-date. In the old-time Elementary Schools, largely, except for teaching the mechanical part of reading, with School Readers he found. Consecutive Readers are the rule. Miss Mason's plan is to bring all children up on Books and Things. She says of this: 'The experience of the last twelve years is pleasing.' Another claim for the P.N.E.U. system is the immunity from educational fads."

It has been my task to investigate and see whether, and to what extent, the claims of P.N.E.U. methods are justified. The results of my investigation will be given in subsequent chapters.

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II.

THE conditions under which Public Elementary Schools may be supplied with the syllabuses and examination questions are laid out in one of the P.N.E.U. pamphlets. They are four:—

I.—The Programmes.

i. "That the programmes shall be worked out in as many subjects as possible, including all the historical, literary, scientific and art subjects, throughout the school."

This, I may say, is not carried out entirely in any of the Gloucestershire Elementary Schools visited by me. The number of subjects taken under P.N.E.U. conditions varied greatly. It was very rare to find the art subjects taken according to the P.N.E.U. plan. Geography was taken in only a few schools. The reason for this was, so I found, that the Ambleside Geography Book was out of date both in content and method. I understand the book is now under revision. Science was taken in a few of the schools, picture study was taken in all but one of the schools, in that school it was omitted because the master saw very little advantage in the scheme. In all the schools, Literature, English, History, French History, and Citizenship were taken. In none of the schools was the P.N.E.U. Arithmetic Syllabus used. It is too easy for Elementary Schools! Miss Penethorne, the Organising Secretary of the P.N.E.U., says on this subject: Frankly the work in mathematics set in P.U. school was never intended to fit the Elementary School child to get through the tests imposed upon it at the present early age. So we say there is no obligation to follow that work where children's interests require something different." It is probable that the P.N.E.U. view, on the question of the arithmetic syllabus, is more educational than the programme at present in vogue in Elementary Schools. Have we not always stressed the importance of arithmetic too much!

II.—The Time.

ii. The amount of time for each subject shall not be more nor less than that stated in the Time-tables.

This condition is not kept in any of the schools I visited. It is not possible to do so in Elementary Schools. The P.N.E.U. time-table presumes that all the book work will be done in the morning sessions and that there are six morning sessions. Further, the length of the six sessions varies for different Forms from $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours in those corresponding to Standards I. and II., to $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours in those corresponding to Standard V., VI. and VII. The teachers in the Elementary Schools of Gloucestershire, naturally, are compelled to vary the times to suit their ten session periods and to fit in with the handwork and domestic training, where taken. It is evidently an oversight that the P.N.E.U. conditions have not been varied for Elementary Schools to fit in with the conditions prevailing there.

III.—The Books.

iii. That each pupil shall have, and read for himself, his own books, as set in his programme.

Here again the conditions are impossible in Elementary Schools. The full supply of books would, as we are told in P.N.E.U. literature, cost about 20s. a year for each pupil. As is well known, the book allowance in Elementary Schools ranges from 1s. 6d. to 3s. or 3s. 6d. per annum, except in Central Schools, where it is, in some cases, a little higher and, under Circular 1288, there is a possibility of even this meagre allowance being reduced instead of increased. The P.N.E.U. plan presumes that each pupil shall be in possession of all the books prescribed in the programme where marked with an asterisk. To overcome this difficulty of not granting a full supply of books, the Gloucestershire plan is to provide a set of books for only a fourth or a fifth of the pupils in a class. The children use the books in turn. This necessitates the teaching of children in groups. Thus, in Gloucestershire, a class will be found split up into various groups, e.g., one group taking Geography, another, English History, a third, French History, a fourth, Science, a fifth, Citizenship, or, maybe, reading one of Scott's novels. Grouping in one subject is not easy, but the difficulty of grouping in four or five different subjects in one lesson must be extremely great.

A Circulating Book Supply.

We were told by Mr. Household, in 1921, in relation to this question of the supply of books, that the heavy cost of equipping P.N.E.U. schools with books rendered it imperative that some means should be found for reducing expenditure in the case of Elementary Schools. He consulted Miss Mason and, in reply, she sent him the copy of a letter she had sent to a mistress of an Elementary School in Norfolk. I will set out the salient points of this letter. Enclosed with it was the syllabus of work for Forms I, II, and III, and a minimum list of books absolutely necessary for the children to have. In the letter she says:—

The correct thing is for each child to have a copy of each of some half-dozen books, more or less, according to the standard she is in; but there where is a real difficulty about expense a little organisation will reduce the cost. For example, in Form III. (your Standards VI. and VII.), as much of the reading is silent the class may be divided into five groups, each group reading a different book; in that case, the form could be worked with six copies of each book. . . . The books for the use of the teacher only (in class) cost, as you will see, about two guineas in addition (in Form III.), but all of these are permanent.

This is the plan adopted in Gloucester. Commenting on it Mr. Household said, in 1921, "This may seem to be a measure of enforced economy, and some may for that reason dislike and resent it." He then goes on to justify the economy on educational grounds. He affirms that "Even in P.N.E.U. Schools there was still often overmuch class-reading, when the brighter children are of necessity kept back to the pace of the slower. When the class is broken up into three, four, or five groups, this cannot be. Nor is it any longer possible for the teacher to intervene unduly between the child and the book." Thus this enforced economy is really, according to Mr. Household, beneficial, a dangerous line of argument for an educationist. One test I would apply. Since 1921, have the P.N.E.U. Secondary Schools adopted this improved (?) method of group teaching, and have the P.N.E.U. advocated its adoption in all P.U. Schools? Mr. Household goes on to say, "The result obtained by the methods and the books have been surprising from the beginning; but in some of the schools that are working on the group system they are nothing short of astounding."

The Group System.

This claim of Mr. Household's that the restriction of books on the grounds of economy can be justified on educational grounds is not borne out, so far as my investigation disclosed. I enquired very carefully into this part of the arrangement and I almost invariably put the following question to the head teacher of the school: "If you had a sufficient supply of books to provide each child in the class with copies of the presented books, instead of being restricted to one-fourth or one-fifth of the number in the various classes, would you work your classes in groups?" The answer, in every case, was "No!" In some cases the reply was emphatic—"Oh, no!" and the tone in which it was said conveyed much. In my opinion, and I propose to return to this question later, the group system will cause the breakdown of the scheme; the schools will give up the P.N.E.U. plan as now carried out, probably retaining some of the methods but applying them to suit the needs of their particular schools. I do not wish, in this criticism of the group system, to convey the impression that there is not much good work done in the schools working this group system. Far from this, I saw some very good work indeed. There are other troubles connected with the group system which I view with much concern, and which in no way detract from the value of the P.N.E.U. plan or methods when carried out in accordance with the normal arrangements of a full supply of books. I hope to make this quite clear before I conclude these articles.

(To be continued.)

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III.

I CONCLUDED my last article with a discussion on the third of the four conditions to which Elementary Schools are expected to conform if they use the P.N.E.U. scheme. The fourth and final condition is:-

IV.—Examinations.

iv. That sets of answers shall be submitted for examination at the usual times; one set for each of the P.U.S. Forms. That all members of each Form take the examinations.

There are three terms in the P.N.E.U. School year, viz., Christmas to Easter, Easter to the Summer Vacation, and the Summer Vacation to Christmas. (In most of our Elementary Schools to-day only two School terms are recognised.)

The syllabuses are drawn up to fit in with these terms and three sets of examination questions are provided, but the summer examination is optional. In all these examinations the questions are sent from Ambleside. It is expected that every child will attempt to answer the questions on all the subjects taken under P.N.E.U. conditions.

Except at the summer examination, one set of answers from each form is to be sent to Ambleside. These answers are corrected and marked before they are sent. They are returned with a general remark. I read a number of answers to the questions set, not answers picked out, but selected by myself, after they had been arranged in order of excellence. Many of the papers were exceedingly creditable, and they varied in the manner an experienced teacher would expect to find. In most of the schools the full examination was taken by all the pupils in the subjects taught on the P.N.E.U. plan. In one school, however, I found that only six picked children had taken the full examination and had been asked to answer all the questions. The remaining children had been given one question in each of the subjects. The reason given for this was that the supply of exercise books did not permit of all the pupils answering all the questions. In this school the answers were all written in exercise books, and most of the pupils covered two books with their answers. The answers of the selected six were well done.

The Syllabus.

The P.N.E.U. syllabus of work is divided into six forms, the two lowest forms are again subdivided into A and B. Thus there are really eight sets of syllabuses of work. These are expected to provide the education for pupils whose ages range from 6 to 18 years of age. Here, naturally, some difficulty arises in applying the syllabuses to Elementary Schools, where the ages range from 6-14. Officially, the following application is suggested by the P.N.E.U.—Form I B, Standard I; Form I A, Standard II; Form II B, Standard III; Form II A, Standard IV; Form III, Standards V and VI; or Form IV, Standards VI and VII. In no school did I find this application adopted. In some cases a form higher than the third taken, and in some cases the highest class did not get beyond Form II A.

From Ambleside each term a printed syllabus of work is issued, setting out the amount to be studied in each subject for all the Forms. It is impossible to find space for a full syllabus of even one Form, but the following syllabus, prescribed for Form II A (Standard IV) in History, will give an idea of the style and "content" of these syllabuses of work:-

Detailed Syllabus in History.

English History.
A History of England, by H. O. Arnold-Forster, chapters 20-34 inclusive, pp. 208-265 (1327-1485).

Teachers will find useful Quennell's *A History of Everyday Things in England*, Part III (1400-1499). Take the Home and Classroom section of *The Times*.

French History.
A First History of France, by L. Creighton, pp. 85-133 (1328-1482).

General History.
The Ancient World, by A. Malet, pp. 252-288. Keep a Book of Centuries, putting in illustrations from all the history studied during the term (Bible, English, French, General).

Visit the British Museum or local museum: The Stone Age, see *Ancient and Medieval Art*, by M. W. Bulley, Lesson 1

(with post cards, p. xxix), British Museum "Guide to the Antiquities of the Stone Age", British Museum Post Cards, series 15.

The other subjects are set out in much the same way. In all cases where books are prescribed, unless the whole book is to be taken, the pages for the term's study are given. Thus for History, Geography, and Natural Science I find the number of pages prescribed are no less than 388. This is for a term of from twelve to thirteen weeks, which means thirty pages a week. Some of the Gloucestershire teachers thought the amount of work prescribed was excessive. Of course if the pupils, as Miss Mason said, can assimilate with one reading, the task set may not be too great. In some schools of Gloucestershire I found that the teachers did as much as they could. They found that pupils could not cover the ground.

It will be noticed that the books prescribed for History are given in the syllabus; this is the case in every subject. I have made a list of the books required by each pupil in Form II A for the subjects taken under the P.N.E.U. scheme in Gloucestershire schools. Some of these books will be used in the higher Forms and not a few were in use in Form II B. It must not be supposed that all the books will only be available for one year; some will be in use several years.

GRAMMAR: *Parts of Speech and Their Uses*, by H. W. Household, 1s. 9d.

HISTORY: *A History of England*, by H. O. Arnold-Forster, 8s. 6d.; *A First History of France*, by L. Creighton, 5s.; *The Ancient World*, by A. Malet, 3s. 6d.

CITIZENSHIP: *North's Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes*, 10d.

GEOGRAPHY: *The British Isles*, Cambridge Press, 3s. 6d. (this has been temporarily substituted for the *Ambleside Geography*, under revision); *Round the Empire*, by Sir George Parkin, 3s.; *Our Sea Power*, by H. W. Household, 2s.

NATURAL HISTORY, ETC.: *Life and Her Children*, by Arabella Buckley, 6s.; *The Sciences*, by E. S. Holden, 3s. 9d.; *Wireless*, by C. R. Gibson, 1s. 3d.

PICTURE STUDY: *Reproductions of Six Pictures by Rembrandt*, 2s., from P.N.E.U. Office.

LITERATURE: *Lyra Heroica*, 3s. 6d.; *Shakespeare's Henry V*, 6d.; Scott's *Anne of Geierstein*, 2s.

Other books are prescribed, but as they have no asterisk attached to them in the list it is evident that a separate copy for each pupil is not expected. Besides the books for pupils, there are several books for teachers, and these are in some cases very expensive. I have not seen the limited list suggested by Miss Charlotte Mason in her letter to the Norfolk headmistress referred to in my previous article. According to Miss Mason, books are the essential material for the education under P.N.E.U. methods. What effect will the limitation of books have on the progress of the pupils? I must leave it at that.

The Programmes.

With regard to the programmes themselves. This is the one thing about the P.N.E.U. scheme which, as a professional teacher, it is difficult to reconcile. These programmes are now drawn up by a committee, the members of which can in many cases lay no claim to any professional training or teaching experience whatsoever. To follow Miss Charlotte Mason, a professional teacher with many, many years of experience behind her, and admittedly one of our great educators, is one thing; to follow blindly a nondescript committee is another. I discussed this with several of the Gloucestershire teachers; they admitted the incongruity of the position. One head teacher told me that before long, in Gloucestershire, they would draw up their own programmes and set their own examinations, but retaining many of the methods and all that was good in the P.N.E.U. scheme. For many reasons I am inclined to think this head teacher is right. The modification of the scheme by practical teachers in Gloucestershire and their selection and rejection of programmes of subjects confirms me in this view.

The questions set at each term examination come from Ambleside, like the programmes. There are two points in connection with these examinations which separate them from the proposed external examinations of some other people. The examinations are absolutely based on the term's work, and they are marked by the teachers themselves without any restrictions. All the teachers are agreed that the questions are satisfactory, and generally I found both they and the pupils liked them. In my next article I propose to deal further with the question of these examinations.

(To be continued.)

THE P.N.E.U. METHOD:

An Investigation.

By MARSHALL JACKMAN.

IN resuming my investigation into P.N.E.U. examinations, I would point out an interesting and unique condition, or, rather, suggestion, in respect to answers to questions. In the lower forms the pupils are not expected to give their answers in writing. They are to narrate them to the teacher, who will write down the narrations. It is obvious that in Elementary Schools this procedure is practically impossible, even in schools where the classes are very small and only a few subjects are taken on P.N.E.U. lines, as in Gloucestershire. In a Home School taught by the mother or a governess, with possibly one, two, three or even as many as four pupils, it is, no doubt, quite practical for the younger children to narrate their answers and have them written down. I did not find that they did so in Gloucestershire, the answers were written by the younger children. I have heard of an Elementary School, not in Gloucestershire, working on the P.N.E.U. lines, where the older girls sat beside the younger ones and wrote down the answers narrated by the younger girls. In this way the P.N.E.U. suggestion might be possible. It has its good points and, I understand, the older girls rather enjoyed doing it. The question is whether, on the balance of advantage, the time thus spent is wisely utilised, so far as the older girls are concerned. It will be quite obvious to any practical teacher, from a perusal of the questions, that written answers by very young children would not be of great value.

Examination for a Junior Class.

Here is an example of the questions set in Geography for Forms 1B and 1A, i.e. for Standards I and II:—

Form 1B, i.e. Standard I

1. What do you know about Galileo's wonderful discovery?
2. Tell what you can about (a), the Eskimos of the Far North, or, (b), the people of mysterious Tibet.

Form 2B, i.e. Standard II

1. Explain what we mean when we say "the sun rises and sets."
2. How can you find out (a), in what direction you are walking, (b), which way the wind is blowing, (c), how the windows of your schoolroom face?
3. Describe some of the things you would see if you went to Holland.

Examination for Senior Classes.

I will give one example of questions set for the higher classes in Elementary Schools, viz. Standards V., VI., and VII. The syllabus for these three standards is Form III., all the standards do the same work but a higher degree of excellence is expected from pupils in the higher classes. I would point out, in passing, that the syllabus is changed every term, so there is no repetition of the work as the children advance from standard to standard; the difficulty of this arrangement, devised for a home school, in its application to an ordinary Elementary School, with its yearly or half-yearly promotions, is rather in covering any subject in a logical sequence.

Form III., i.e. Standards V., VI. and VII.

English History.

1. Give some account of the "ruin of France" in the reign of Edward III. Dates.
2. "He is young, we can do with him what we please." Give some account of the speaker and of the king referred to, and describe in detail (according to Froissart) the scene before the Abbey of St. Bartholomew.
3. Who were the rival claimants of the Houses of York and Lancaster for the Throne? Show by a table the origin of their respective claims, and describe the course of the war that followed.

General History.

1. What do you know of (a), the people, (b), self-government, (c), trade, in the Middle Ages?
2. 1. Write a brief account of the reign of (a), Charles the Wise, (b), Louis XI. Dates.
2. Describe, with rough sketches, some of the relics of Paleolithic Art that have been found.
3. "Resolved . . . to make myself master of India. Did so." How did Tamerlane carry out this resolve?

Examination Not Prepared For.

It is claimed for these examinations that they are "not prepared for," that "one reading followed by narration has been sufficient."

Training in Receptivity.

It is quite possible that these examinations are not prepared for in the general sense of the term, as applied to school examinations. That is, there is no special revision towards the end of the term. But with regard to the second claim, it is usual for considerable revision to be undertaken. There may be only one formal or prescribed reading of the text-book, although in some cases I found a second reading was undertaken, and even a third. The one reading is followed invariably by a narration, to which as a rule the whole class listens. In some instances more than one child narrates, in all cases the pupils are asked to supply omissions in a narration. At the end of the narration, and after the correction of the narration, the teacher often gathers up the chief points and presses them home. At the beginning of the lesson the work, taken in a previous lesson, was recalled, either by questions put by the teacher or through narrations by the pupils. In many cases the oral narration was supplemented by a written narration at a later date, a week or a fortnight later. These two procedures are strictly in accordance with P.N.E.U. methods. The elder pupils are expected to keep notes in a book which is not strictly supervised, but only overlooked from time to time. In most of the schools the pupils were encouraged to utilise any spare moments in reading the books prescribed for the term. In some cases the books were taken home and read. Thus it will be seen that although there may be only one reading and one organised oral or written narration, there is a considerable amount of revision in one form or another. In stating these various ways in which revision comes about under the P.N.E.U. plan I am not in any sense disparaging them. They struck me as being exceedingly good and quite practical. It is not accurate, however, to imply that the P.N.E.U. pupils are so phenomenal that they can reproduce, months after a lesson, the substance of it without any revision. I do not think any of the Gloucestershire teachers would make such a claim. No doubt the one reading and the narration immediately following is an excellent training in receptivity, in observation and in attention. Narration is the one feature of the P.N.E.U. method which strongly appealed to me and which I propose to deal with in the next article. I found no complaint with regard to the questions set. From the class teachers' point of view they were appreciated as they were on the exact syllabus and were quite definite. To head teachers they were useful, as they relieved them of the task of preparing questions for the pupils. I examined several sets of answers. They were well done. I found the usual varying degree of excellence.

Half-Baked Experts.

There is one feature of school organisation which cannot be used in connection with the P.N.E.U. method, that is the utilisation of the specialist on a school staff. Specialisation does not fit in with a stereotyped syllabus and an examination based on it, imposed from without. In fact, I noticed that Mr. Household in his presidential address at Cirencester dismisses the specialist in very seathing terms. In his opinion the specialist is out of place until the pupils are fifteen or sixteen years of age. He says: "*Not long ago we had the specialist plan spreading even into the Elementary School.*" (Yes! long before the P.N.E.U. plan found root in Gloucestershire—and it still flourishes) "*and inspectors recommending it—the English master, the history mistress, the geography mistress, and so on. One knew not whether to laugh or weep for the sorrows of the children stampeded under floods of evanescent, inappropriate and most useless information. The specialist idea has been worked to death.*" Yet in the "New Suggestions by the Board of Education," this effete plan is still strongly recommended for history and geography, and even Mr. Household would hardly deny that in some subjects, such as art, music, handicraft, Nature study, and perhaps physical training, the specialist is almost a necessity. The Board of Education go so far as to recommend that in a small school, where the one teacher has no taste for one of these special subjects, "it will be wise to omit the subject altogether rather than to teach it badly or half-heartedly." In my next article I purpose to deal with "Narration," the chief feature of the P.N.E.U. method—Its benefits, its dangers.

(To be continued.)

THE P.N.E.U. METHOD:

An Investigation.

By MARSHALL JACKMAN.

V

The Uniform Syllabus.

THIS uniform syllabus, followed by a uniform test at the end of the term, means that some 200 odd schools in Gloucestershire are all working precisely the same syllabus. To me this is disconcerting. Is such uniformity good? It may be in some subjects. But there is a danger, among other evils, of the initiative of the teacher being suppressed. In this opinion I find I am supported by the Board of Education. "Suggestions," at any rate, on the preparation of a history syllabus. The "Suggestions" say: "It is undesirable that all schools in any particular locality should follow precisely the same syllabus. Each teacher should think out and frame his own scheme, having regard to the circumstances of his school, its rural or urban environment, its staffing and classification, and in some measure also to the books and the topics which most appeal to him."

Under these circumstances the question naturally arises why so many Elementary Schools in Gloucestershire, compared with the rest of the country, have adopted P.N.E.U. methods. Undoubtedly, the enthusiasm and encouragement of the Education Secretary count for much. No one could come within the influence of Mr. Household's zeal for the adoption of P.N.E.U. methods without being strongly infected. I found, however, there had been another potent influence at work.

Why P.N.E.U. Grew.

At first no Elementary School in Gloucestershire was given permission to adopt the P.N.E.U. methods unless it had reached a standard of efficiency which in the opinion of the Education Secretary justified him in giving this sanction. All schools which were given permission thus secured for themselves a hallmark of efficiency within the county. As a consequence schools which were not allowed to adopt the P.N.E.U. method, or did not make application to adopt it, found themselves in a somewhat invidious position, particularly in the eyes of managers of Non-Provided schools, and there are many in Gloucestershire. Hence was fomented a desire to be recognised as a P.N.E.U. school. Apart from the merits of the method or the conversion of the teachers to the method, there was naturally a strong incentive to avoid being labelled, by inference, as less efficient. For a time this condition, no doubt, had an enormous influence on the growth of the P.N.E.U. method in Gloucestershire. Now, I believe, the efficiency condition has been removed. Any school may obtain permission to adopt the P.N.E.U. plan and will be allowed the necessary books. With these facts in mind it is not difficult to understand why the growth of the P.N.E.U. method among the Elementary Schools of Gloucester has been so rapid, since the conversion of Mr. Household in 1917, compared with the rest of the county.

Enthusiastic Teachers.

In all the schools I visited I found the teachers—particularly the head teachers—were enthusiasts for the scheme and had no desire to revert to the old régime. They believe in it. They found difficulties in applying the methods to the organisation and equipment of Elementary Schools. They faced these, and modified the plan, applying their skill and knowledge as practical teachers to the problem. As I have already pointed out, no school which I visited in Gloucestershire is strictly a P.N.E.U. school. In time, I am of opinion that the schools of Gloucestershire will throw off the yoke of uniform syllabus imposed from without and an examination based upon it, but will retain all that they have found good and practical in connection with P.N.E.U. methods. They will prepare their own syllabus, set their own questions, and select the books themselves.

Narration.

The outstanding teaching feature of the P.N.E.U. scheme is that of narration. It is almost the only new feature, strictly speaking, of the teaching method. It is quite good. The more I saw of narration the more it appealed to me. I am not prepared to accept all that is claimed for it. As a teaching method it has so many good points that it should not be cast lightly aside. If used with common sense, and in moderation, it cannot help being useful. Moreover, it

may be adopted for general use in schools without in any other way being tied down to P.N.E.U. methods. I enlisted the aid of a P.N.E.U. teacher to give me a description of narration as she applied it. I will give it almost as she set it out, and at the end I shall add a few comments myself from my experience in Gloucestershire.

Narration may take several forms such as spoken, written, silent, sketching or modelling in plasticine or clay. As regards spoken narration, it can be taken in more ways than one, according to the desire of the teacher, but there must be a sympathetic atmosphere; this is most essential in spoken narration. The children may narrate sitting. In fact it is better so, as standing up in front of the class is apt to make a nervous child more nervous. The teacher will read the piece to be narrated once only. The pupils may have their books open and follow the teacher in her reading. The reading may be done silently or aloud, different children reading in turn. There must be one reading and one only, whether by teacher or children, before narration. Better results are obtained if a fairly long piece (say three pages) is read than if the passage selected is short. With short passages there is a tendency to memorise the words of the book, with a long passage only the gist of the portion read is memorised, and that, in the children's own words, is the goal to be aimed at.

Nervous Strain to be Avoided.

Generally, the brighter children are chosen to narrate, particularly in the earlier lessons, as it would be rather dull to listen to halting narration. The less bright learn from the narration of their brighter companions. However, sometimes the backward ones narrate, helped by other pupils. Nervousness or stage fright should be treated very sympathetically. No strain should be put upon a nervous child. Another pupil should at once be called up to continue the narration. Where the children read silently those who finish first are encouraged to turn over their books and to think back until the whole class is ready for the public narration. This prevents reading the passage a second time, and it is excellent practice as well. In written narration, particularly, it is noticed that many children spend quite a long time in thinking back before they write. Children are specially encouraged to do silent narration when books are read at home.

In order to vary the spoken narration, the children sometimes come out in groups to tell back to the teacher, while the remainder tell back to each other or silently. In some cases a general or public narration has taken place before they narrate in groups. In no case should the narration of a child be interrupted; at the end of the narration the other children are asked to fill in omissions, and the teacher may correct errors of speech or statement. At times spoken and written narration are combined, one half of the class taking written, while the other half tell back to the teacher. The groups can be changed or the children who have been doing written narration may read their efforts to the others. When the whole class is doing written narration the teacher goes round systematically to each child and corrects while the pupil is actually doing the narration.

In nature study, in history and in geography, narration often takes the form of drawing or modelling in the junior classes. This form of narration gives the teacher an opportunity of hearing individuals tell back—the nervous and the dull—as she can easily supervise the work of the rest of the class. With the older girls it is not always necessary, nor is it desirable, that the narration should be just telling back what has been read. A problematic question might be set on the passage read and the pupil might say or write the answer. Often, at first, this form of narration causes difficulty. The pupils, instead of answering the question, endeavour to bring in all the matter of the period read. Written narration may be accepted in the form of prose or poetry. It is essential that narration should be varied and must follow a first reading.

(To be continued.)

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THE P.N.E.U. METHOD :

An Investigation.

By MARSHALL JACKMAN.

One Reading, Many Narrations.

WHILE there is only one reading before narration, there are many narrations, and they take many forms. The practice of the teachers, set out above, and my experience of P.N.E.U. Schools in Gloucestershire are in contradiction of Miss Mason's claim that "The children always pay absolute attention; nothing need be repeated, no former work is revised"; they are also in contradiction of Mr. Household's claim that "One reading followed by narration has been sufficient" for answering questions set at the terminal examination. There is very considerable revision, which is what all practical teachers would expect—only a theorist would expect otherwise. I quite agree that the nervous child should be treated sympathetically. One of the things which gave me the most concern in my Gloucestershire experience was my observation of the nervous strain of the pupils when narrating. They moved their hands, their arms, their legs, and their feet in most nervous fashion. The movements were so marked that I called the attention of the teachers to them. They had not noticed these movements before. Whether the nervousness was increased by the presence of a stranger and an excessive desire to do well I cannot say. I feel if I were a headmaster of one of these schools I should certainly call the attention of the school medical officer to the symptoms and seek advice.

I also concur in the opinion that there should be only one reading before narration. It is this practice of reproducing, without repetition, which trains the pupil to listen attentively, to follow carefully, and to assimilate more or less fully what is read to it or what it reads itself. There may be, and in all schools I visited there were, many narrations. In more than one school it was the practice to narrate orally in the morning immediately after one reading, and in the afternoon to do a written narration on the morning's reading.

A Narration Lesson.

Here is a description of a narration lesson, followed at once by an oral narration, and in the afternoon by a written narration. The class, Standard III, took Form IIa syllabus. The teacher read the story of how Thor recovered his hammer. The teacher read the story once, making several explanations. One of the pupils then "told back" the story. During the narration at times, not often, the teacher corrected serious faults in English and also in expression. The other pupils assisted when the narrator came to a distinct pause. After the narration by the pupil, the teacher gave an example of how the story should have been narrated. In the afternoon the children wrote the narration of the story which had been read and orally narrated in the morning. This was the usual practice of that school. At my request these written narrations were done on a separate sheet of paper so that I might bring them away. It was a pleasure to read them; they were all very creditable indeed. No assistance was given to the pupils during the written exercise, except any word which was a difficult spelling, at a pupil's request, was written on the blackboard. By the end of the lesson the blackboard was quite full of words. The ages of the pupils ranged from 8 to 11. This is one of the best exercises by a pupil 9 years old :-

"HOW THOR RECOVERED HIS HAMMER."

Thor had a wonderful hammer known as Milner. The wonderful thing about this hammer was, that when he threw it, it always came back to his hand. One day he lost Milner, and found that Thrym had hid it deep down in the rocks of Jotunheim. Thor sent the cunning Loki to ask Thrym for Milner. Thrym promised that the hammer should be given back, if Freya was given for his bride. Loki went back to Asgard and gave his report to Thor. Thor was very sad, but after thinking he suggested that he would dress up as Freya, and accompany Loki to Jotunheim. He wore a thick veil and soon they arrived at Thrym's home. Thrym was very pleased to see his future wife, and treated her with courtesy. Thrym was very surprised to see that his bride ate eight whole salmon, and one ox, washing it all down with three tons of mead: After supper Thrym looked at his bride, and his conscience struck him so that he lifted the veil. He was very frightened to see that her eye balls gleamed with fire. He turned to Loki and asked why this was. Loki replied that she had had

no food to eat for eight days for she had been so excited to see Thrym. Then Thrym guessed why she had had so much to eat for supper. Then Thrym ordered that Milner should be brought in. It was put in the lap of the bride, who was Thor. He threw off his disguise, and with Milner he struck Thrym, and his followers to the ground.

I think most teachers will agree with me, for a child of nine, that it is a very creditable performance indeed, particularly in the setting out of the events in logical sequence. The punctuation also is very satisfactory. It must be remembered that most of the more difficult words were written on the blackboard.

Considerable Power in Reproducing.

From my examination of written exercises generally in the various schools visited I came to the conclusion that the systematic practice of oral and written narration gave the pupils considerable power in reproducing in their own words the content of what they read or of what was read to them. In the school at which the above exercise was written there was a considerable departure from the strict P.N.E.U. method, but the modifications had been very carefully thought out and had been applied with discretion. I am not satisfied that there would be the same facility of expression and logical sequence of statement in composition exercises where the pupils had to express their ideas on subjects not read directly from their text-books. I found most of the written and oral compositions were in connection with narrations. In one school I came across some very satisfactory work in original composition, quite apart from narration, from the pupils of the highest class. They were on subjects which could not be gleaned directly from their books. Here I found a practice of securing two or three lectures a week from the elder pupils was in operation. I heard two of these lectures, one on motor cycles and the other on birds. Both had been given before, but allowing for this, they were quite good. The pupils spoke without hesitation, one might almost say fluently, and they marshalled their facts in logical sequence.

Narration, supplemented by such exercises, I feel sure, would produce really good composition. I questioned two of the pupils in this class on the various subjects of the P.N.E.U. syllabus which they had been studying during their school career, not those they had immediately studied. One pupil was a boy of 12 and the other a girl of 13. The answers they gave were quite good, showing an intelligent knowledge and appreciation of what they had studied. For example, both of them could tell me the names of six or seven plays of Shakespeare they had read. They could indicate their favourite plays and the characters which appealed to them most. They were also able to describe a great deal about each play and stood a cross-examination very creditably. In this school I found that the P.N.E.U. scheme had been very considerably modified, but in very sensible and practical directions.

Long and Painful Pauses.

In one school, where I heard a narration lesson carried out on strictly P.N.E.U. lines, I must confess it was the least satisfactory of any I came across. The teacher read a portion of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" (about two and a-half pages) quite well, but without any comment. A little child was then asked to narrate, and did so in a very halting manner. There were several long and painful pauses. No assistance came from the teacher, nor did the teacher ask any of the pupils to assist the unfortunate narrator. There was no correction while the narration was in progress. Before the end of the "telling back" the other children looked bored, and many of them were inattentive; they had evidently given up any attempt to follow the narrator. I formed the opinion that it was far better for pupils to be assisted, either by the teacher or their fellow pupils, when narrating than to be left severely alone. I also consider a moderate amount of correction even during narration is beneficial.

As I have already pointed out in several parts of the account of my investigations, the great blot on the Gloucestershire plan of working the P.N.E.U. method is the group system. I purpose to deal with this and to sum up conclusions in my final article next week.

(To be concluded.)

Imperial Institute Cinema.—By arrangement with the London County Council the Imperial Institute Cinema will be open from 2.40 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. on Sundays for the free display of films relating to the life and industries of the Dominions, India, the Colonies and Protectorates. The Cinema is open free on week days from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

THE P.N.E.U. METHOD :

An Investigation.

By MARSHALL JACKMAN.

VII.—The Group System.

IN most of the schools, particularly in the lower classes, the "telling back" orally was given in a sing-song, monotonous tone of voice, with little or no expression; and, except in one or two cases, no attempt was made to eradicate this. In a few of the schools there was certainly an improvement in expression in the higher classes. But, on the whole, it was a feature of the work which was not up to the standard of others.

One very satisfactory condition in the schools of Gloucestershire was the practice of not transferring pupils from the infants' section to the senior section until they were able to read, i.e. until they had overcome the mechanical difficulties of reading. Under the P.N.E.U. scheme (if not under any scheme) this is essential. Unless a pupil can read it is helpless even in Form II. As the schools I visited, with one or two exceptions, were combined infants and mixed departments, under one head teacher, it was not difficult to carry out this arrangement in classifying children. Reading, so far as the mastering of mechanical difficulties was concerned, reached a very good standard in all the schools. On the other hand, the claim that training under P.N.E.U. methods encourages a great desire for reading, and that pupils read a great deal out of school, was not borne out by my investigations. There was little or no evidence of the creation of any great love for reading generally. All the teachers assured me they had noticed a very great increase in amount of reading at home since the introduction of the P.N.E.U. plan. This I was unable to test. I accept it, but at the same time am forced to consider that reading among Gloucestershire children must have been at a very low ebb before. I made special enquiries in this direction. I questioned the children on the books they read at home, when they read them, and how much time they spent on reading them. Except in a few isolated cases, not of schools, but of individual pupils, there was considerably less home reading among Gloucestershire children than I should expect to find among children in even the poorest of the London schools.

The Group System—A Blot.

As I have already pointed out, the group system has been adopted in Gloucestershire to get over the difficulty of the cost of books. The claim of Mr. Household that it has proved not only to be sound educationally, but also a distinct advantage, is not borne out by my investigation. It is the rock on which the P.N.E.U. barque will probably founder. The group system is the great drawback to the scheme. All the teachers admit they would drop the grouping of their pupils if there was a full supply of books for the whole class. Let us visualise a class under such a scheme. One group will be taking History of England, another History of France, a third Geography, a fourth Nature Study, a fifth Citizenship, a sixth English Literature, probably Scott's "Monastery." As the classes in Gloucestershire are small, at any rate in the schools I visited, generally under 40, many under 30, probably five or six groups would suffice. In order to cover the course of reading prescribed, this grouping must be carried out at least twice a week for each subject. There will be ten, twelve, or even more group lessons a week. Each group is supposed to have a group leader, a pupil of the class, who is responsible for the orderly arrangement of the work. I was told that the teacher depended upon the group leader to correct glaring errors. It will be seen that little of the teacher's time can be spent with a group. The children read the passage allotted aloud to the group. At the end of the reading the pupils narrate in their groups. Except the group leader and the occasional intervention of the teacher, as he travels round, there is no one to correct errors. I spent a little time with one of the grouped classes listening to the narrations. They were carried out quite orderly and most of the children appeared to be interested and keen. The mistakes, however, were left uncorrected. For example, in one group taking Geography. I heard a girl describe the torrid zone as a cooler place; no one corrected. I then went to another group taking History and heard a boy create a new King of England, Henry IX; here, again, no one corrected. Even with the most skilful teacher, narration under such circumstances must lose most of its value, if not, indeed, become harmful. No correction of incorrect expressions, even at the end of the narration, is possible. When it is admitted that narration, and particu-

larly oral narration, is one of the distinguishing features of the P.N.E.U. scheme, it will not be difficult to realise how harmful this grouping may become.

In many cases, especially under the "group system," as practised in Gloucestershire, the "telling back," except when they narrate in their groups, is confined to written narrations. There is less public narration before the whole class under the direct supervision of the teacher. In one school in particular there was practically no oral narration in the highest class taken by the head teacher; it was all written narration. I examined many of these written exercises. In one instance I found that the exercises of the pupils were almost identical in expression. On reference to the text-book it was evident that the pupils had memorised the portion read. The amount allotted was too short. In another school there was grouping, but no oral narration at all. One group wrote while the other read. This added very considerably to the amount of written exercises by the pupils and consequent additional marking on the part of the teachers. The children in this school wrote an enormous amount, but their written narrations, from the point of view of expression, of construction, of logical sequence and of correctness of facts, even in the top class, were very poor. The pupils undoubtedly wrote too much and the corrections by the teachers, which were well done, received all too little attention. The head teacher realised the defect, but felt, owing to the lack of sufficient books for the whole class, it was the only plan which could be adopted.

Drudgery of Corrections

Quite contrary to the practice advocated by the P.N.E.U., and contrary to the practice of the P.N.E.U. teacher, outlined above, none of the corrections in the Gloucestershire schools is made in school-time with the child standing by. They are all made by the teachers after school hours. These corrections entail an enormous amount of work in many cases, consuming as much as two hours per evening of a teacher's time.

The drudgery of marking is fast becoming an intolerable burden, but what is still worse is that this intolerable burden in many cases is a useless expenditure of time. Little use is made of the corrections. In many cases the pupils merely look at them and there the utility of the corrections ends. Unless something is done to relieve the teachers of this excessive amount of corrections it is pretty clear to me that the P.N.E.U. methods will be dropped, even in Gloucestershire, for this reason alone.

With regard to the excessive time expended in marking in Gloucestershire, it sounds strange when read in connection with the advantages for the scheme set forth in "A Liberal Education for All." The fifth claim is "Teachers Are Relieved of the Exhausting Drudgery of Many Corrections." Not in Gloucestershire; I venture to assert that in no other part of the country is it so exhausting as in that county under P.N.E.U. conditions.

Picture Study.

An exceedingly interesting feature of the P.N.E.U. scheme is that part described as "Picture Study." Each term four or five of the pictures of one of the world's great artists are selected for study. This term the artist selected is Botticelli. Sets of these pictures may be obtained from the Union. Unfortunately those supplied are very small, octavo size, and they are uncoloured. This is a drawback. Notwithstanding the poor character of the pictures I found, where the study had been carefully and skilfully carried out, some exceedingly good results had been obtained. Next to narration it is one of the best features of the P.N.E.U. scheme. The pictures are not dealt with so much from the artistic side, although that need not be neglected, but from the side of discovering all that can be gleaned from the picture—its details, its story, etc. The children throughout the school take the same pictures. They narrate orally, as well as by writing and sketching. It was remarkable how much more than ordinary pupils the children who had been trained in picture study were able to see in a picture. It is certainly a capital training in observation under pleasant conditions. This part of the P.N.E.U. syllabus would undoubtedly appeal to teachers. From several points of view it might be improved upon; any practical teacher would

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fact that the scouts of to-day are the homemakers of tomorrow who must be made happy and efficient in the performance of their tasks. Hand-in-hand with the spirit of service and the ability to serve must go fitness for service, which is another of the big aims of the movement. Scouts are taught to play hard and fair; they know the lure of the outdoor life and the joy of keen, healthy competition. It is our firm belief that the scout movement will be, and is, one of the strongest factors in the development of the adult citizen of the future.

The Function of Education.

It is in the nation's schools, however, that the greatest opportunity exists, for education at the expense of the State can be justified only on the grounds that it improves the standard of citizenship. In the building of the British nation our forefathers laid the foundations of freedom and justice which we enjoy, and the schools serve as laboratories where the minds and bodies of children are trained to appreciate their glorious heritage. We live still in a world where everyone desires to recognise that human beings are more precious than machines or systems, and where discipline, efficiency, and obedience, are not merely military virtues, but are also requisites for industrial, commercial, domestic, and civic success. It is still necessary that young people should be trained to do thoroughly whatever it may be their duty to do and to find stimulus in the satisfaction that arises from the mastering of difficulties because of the virtuous end in view. No matter how unsavoury the allotted task all workers must habituate themselves, through discouragement and evil conditions, to persevering with grim and whole-hearted loyalty to the end. By such arduous routes as these are the seeds of citizenship sown and nowhere so effectively as in the nation's schools, which are the looms in which the country's destiny is woven. The warp and woof of the schools' product is character, which is the aim of all education.

All that is best in the world's literature, music, architecture, sculpture, painting, philosophy, and other knowledge that satisfies the intellect and inspires the heart can become the common possession of all by means of our schools. We want citizens who are alert, able to think and act, and too intelligently critical to be easily hoodwinked by mere slogans or a morbid Press. We desire them to know how to choose the things that matter in daily life; how to weigh the relative value and importance of things; how to organise ideas and facts; and how to be balanced and self-reliant. History and civics develop the reasoning power, and whilst they cannot fail to kindle patriotism they should cure narrow provincialism—a provincialism that sneers at all foreigners and believes that one's own country can never be in the wrong. The ability to examine both sides of an argument with the aim of picking out the truth whilst seeing the other man's point of view, can be exercised by children as well as by adults, if they are discreetly directed in the use of their intelligence. No teacher worthy of the name is capable of descending so low as to twist history to suit his own preconceived political notions or social theories. The impersonal search for truth is his main business and his elementary duty. It is his function to concentrate on the character and work of the patriots of all times and all nations and to show how, through actions and reactions, the ideals of culture have taken shape in the world.

Teachers then, more than any other body of people, hold within their grasp the opportunity of creating in the youth of the nation the desire to proceed ever onward and upward to attain perfection. To accomplish their task they must not permit their powers to become atrophied, but must continue to grow and expand themselves. They must possess the vision to see that their efforts are not expended on brick or stone which crumble and decay but are concerned with things eternal. It is chiefly through our schools that a more virile and effective civic life can be fostered and secured. When a citizen becomes better acquainted with the services provided by a municipality or other body, for himself and his neighbours, he becomes more and more a part of the community in which the spirit of sacrifice is apparent for the good of all. If these articles have succeeded in focusing attention on some of the commoner aspects of town life that previously were vague and uncertain to the average citizen, their purpose will have been achieved.

A Menace to the British Constitution.

COLONEL R. V. K. APPLIN, M.P. (vice-chairman of the Central Executive of the National Citizens' Union), has been talking. At a garden meeting of the Dowlish local branch (reported in the *Dowlish Gazette*) he amused his audience by dreadful word-pictures of what would happen to the Constitution and the Flag if patriots did not support the National Citizens' Union. After *decrying* political partisanship he warned his audience that Socialists nearly always ended by becoming Communists, who would go to the same lengths as the revolutionaries in Russia with their disregard of life, who hated above everything else the British Flag, and who, given the opportunity, would govern the country without King or Constitution.

Here is another bright passage:—

He asked: Were they completely ruined by this war which they thought they had won? Had it destroyed all their moral sense? When he saw "Safety First" placarded in all directions he wondered how they would have got their Empire if their forefathers had only thought of safety first. To his mind "Safety First" was an unchristian thing. This was ruining them—all this demand for an easy life, all this desire for luxury.

This is perfectly delightful, for surely the whole basis of the N.C.U. is "Safety First!" However, we have no concern with these opinions of Colonel Applin, M.P., but when he deals with education and teachers we are inclined to take notice.

He says:—

They were spending seventy-seven million pounds on education and getting about five million pounds' worth for it. They were paying salaries to teachers which were out of all proportion to the services they gave in return. They would be surprised if they went into the schools and saw how little real teaching there was. The children were taught things about birds and flowers which they should learn in a natural way.

Now, five million pounds is a nice answer to a sum—it looks as if the problem comes out. We should be sincerely grateful if we could be furnished with the working. But with or without that bright and beautiful example of costing, we shall be compelled to disagree. Nor are we in bad company. The Prime Minister, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Archbishops, and the leaders of the Free Churches, all responsible statesmen and experienced public administrators would certainly regard such a statement as unmilitated nonsense.

The nation that won the War and endured loyally the irritations of the early years of peace, the men and women whose human qualities make revolution impossible in this country, the workmen who can hold their own in the fierce economic competition of to-day, the happy lads and lasses in the schools who constitute Britain's greatest asset, the whole output of our educational system, provide conclusive evidence that the schools give wonderful value for money.

We must doubt whether the speaker knows anything at all about schools or teachers, or educational administration. In a later speech General Sir Claude Bray referred, among other things, to the subject of education, and expressed the hope that Colonel Applin would pursue this subject a little further officially, when he (Sir Claude) felt sure that he would modify his opinions, especially with regard to the Secondary Schools, which were really wonderful.

Here, too, is the implication that a very little knowledge is easily supplemented, and with advantage. Everyone will agree with Sir Claude Bray about the quality of the work in our Secondary Schools. Even there, however, everything depends upon the children, and as these are in bulk the product of the Elementary School, and as 90 per cent. of the school honours all over the country are gained by ex-Primary boys and girls, the Secondary School excellence is surely another testimonial to the Elementary system.

Teachers themselves need not worry when criticism is so shallow and ill-informed. Even the salaries of to-day do not attract entrants from the well-to-do classes. Such salaries are certainly better than the sweated rates of pre-war days, but teachers do not make fortunes. Any attempt to degrade the teaching profession or the people's schools, however, would be an expression of parsimony of the most reactionary and stupid kind. Discontent is begotten by lack of fair opportunity. Education provides avenues to knowledge, to good conduct and to true citizenship, to livelihood and to life. Those who would limit or deny such opportunities are indeed "A Menace to the British Constitution."

SYDNEY BLAKE.

Conclusions.

I will now endeavour to sum up briefly my conclusions in respect of the investigation of the P.N.E.U. system in the Elementary Schools of Gloucestershire.

(1) That the claim of Miss Mason and the disciples of Ambleside House of Education is very greatly exaggerated. It falls far short of the glowing description of it by Miss Mason as outlined in my first article.

(2) That there are many pleasing features in the Ambleside Scheme of Education and that the method of teaching and the suggestions for organising Home Schools, as promulgated by Miss Mason, are a great and valuable contribution to the education of pupils in their own homes. Miss Mason filled a great gap in the educational system of this country when she gave to parents and to governors a method by which they could (a) arrange a suitable syllabus for, and (b) test the results of the education of pupils in the home.

(3) That the application of the P.N.E.U. home school scheme without practically any variation to ordinary Elementary Schools with their large classes and their limitation of books needed more consideration than had been given to it in Gloucestershire; the growth had not been natural there.

(4) That such a scheme is not required for the Elementary Schools of England as it was for the Home Schools. The Elementary Schools of England are, on the whole, probably in the hands of the best-trained and most skilful teachers in the world. Miss Mason was one of them. They do not require to be fed with an imposed syllabus and are quite able to test the results of their teaching without the use of a set of uniform examination papers prepared by an outside unprofessional body.

(5) That the syllabus in its application to Elementary Schools presents many difficulties. The sections, i.e. "Forms," under which it is arranged, the school terms into which the syllabus is divided, the subjects provided for, do not fit in with the classes, the educational periods, ^{and} the subjects of the curriculum generally applicable to ordinary Elementary Schools. It is true that in Gloucestershire, in the schools I visited, the teachers had applied their teaching skill, their experience and their common sense, and had modified the Ambleside scheme to fit in with their special conditions. They had forced them to fit.

(6) That the restriction of books which compels the classes to be taught in groups is altogether foreign to the P.N.E.U. methods, and will eventually break down the scheme in Gloucestershire.

(7) That the best part of the P.N.E.U. teaching scheme, and really the only teaching method peculiar to it, is that of narration. Narration itself is not new. The Board of Education in their "Suggestions" on English advocate it. They say the children "should be encouraged to relate the substance of what they have read in words of their own, and with their teacher's help to turn it over in their minds till they apprehend its meaning completely. For this both oral and written exercises will be necessary." This is certainly a form of narration. Most practical teachers have used narration. The new feature of narration in the P.N.E.U. scheme is its application to most of the school subjects and its practice after one reading only. The latter is certainly a very good point. In my opinion teachers generally should consider the question of the adoption of narration more commonly than at present. They will find it a "ail."

(8) That while there is no doubt that the application of some of the P.N.E.U. methods to the teaching of English may be desirable, also to the teaching of history and probably citizenship, it is very doubtful whether it is at all applicable to such subjects as geography and science. The Board of Education "Suggestions" certainly do not approve of it so far as the teaching of nature study is concerned. They say: "To substitute the gaining of information from books for actual observation and experiment with material things is to defeat the whole aim of the course. Children, however, whose interests and curiosity have been aroused will desire to know more about the subject and will be eager to supplement from books knowledge acquired in other ways."

Miss Mason puts books first; the "Suggestions" place them second. Even in history I am doubtful whether the teacher should not come first and the text-book later. In this, again, I find support in the "Suggestions": "Exposition by the teacher in vivid and simple language has its place in history teaching and may be more inspiring than any book." How different is this opinion from J. B. Household's with his "half-baked experts"!

(9) That picture study, as set out in the P.N.E.U. programme, is quite good; it might well be followed, or something similar.

(10) That a C of the P.N.E.U. scheme, as carried out in Gloucestershire, in the strain of marking exercises is almost intolerable. t b

(11) That many of the books selected are not suitable. For instance, Scott's novels. "Few practical teachers would deny that most children in the elementary Schools find it difficult to get behind the veil of Scott's style and language, which is alien to anything of which they have experience, and to enter into the spirit of his romances." This is from the Board of Education's "Suggestions." The teachers in Gloucestershire thought the books too difficult.

(Continued at foot of next column.)

The Schoolboy Off Duty. The Ramblers' Club.

By W. MILLINGTON, B.Sc., F.R.G.S.

THE schoolmaster who knows his boys only from contact with them during school hours, where the shackles of discipline hamper the free expression of ideas, has a great deal to learn. The writer had been trying, with only indifferent success, for ten years, to understand boys. Then he took a score or so of them on a ten-miles ramble. His real appreciation of the schoolboy's psychology began from that time. Now a better mutual understanding results from a three-hours walk and talk once a fortnight than from any lesson and function that is associated with the school buildings and all that they imply in the way of discipline.

What is so fine about this out-into-the-open-with-the-boys idea is that they became so frank and entertaining. I suppose they think a master rigged out in field kit is far more easily approached and open to more intimate companionship than one dressed in the sombre trappings so reminiscent of monasteries and the Middle Ages. At any rate, during our rambles distinctions of age and attainments are allowed to fall into the background and we are *just ramblers*. The boys argue with each other and vie with each other in the telling of impossible tall stories. I am sometimes appealed to as umpire.

The Encyclopaedic Teacher.

If one thing more than another emerges from eight years of rambling experience it is the unshatterable belief boys have in the range and profundity of a master's knowledge. One is expected to know *outright* the pet subject of every boy. Be it fag-end lore, birds' nests, butterflies or boats, one is expected to talk learnedly; the old series of "Do You Know?" cards was a favourite with the boys. On birds and butterflies I was rarely caught, being country born. Of boats I have learned to talk of masts, beams, hatchways, and such nautical terms as though to the manner born. It is amazing at times to discover the extent to which a boy will read up some subject. At times one blushes for one's ignorance. Often they are the teachers, I taught.

The Boy Who Knew.

The boy who evinces little interest in anything at school is often an authority on some subject not featuring in the time-table. I am indebted to a boy who rambled with us in the days when this district was new to me for a hundred facts of local history, architecture and folk-lore. Another, in an effort to please, volunteered to show me all the exposed rock surfaces in the neighbourhood.

We make no effort to be intellectual and the Ramblers' time passes in many ways. The disgrace of one form-list tells his bird-nesting experiences and with another boy debates the morality of taking "only one egg." He is very entertaining and knows some interesting or humorous incident about most of the folk we meet.

How they eat! A few eat from the commencement of a ramble to its end. The more temperate ones have dubbed these the "one-meal-a-day brigade." Most boys know some half-way house where they regale themselves with the indispensable ginger-beer. The going is not so good in the second half.

Try as I may to avoid it, I am not always successful in side-tracking the boy who wants to ask personal questions. They spring from a genuine desire to air a grievance or obtain knowledge. The boy who asks them is neither cheeky or inquisitive; that type of boy, I find, is intensely disliked by other boys. One wants to know whether I do not think one of the masters gives too many detentions and impositions; another why we are not closing for the holidays—you never hear a boy say vacation—at noon instead of at 4.30 p.m.; and yet a third wants to know why we did not get the "half" Sir E. F. promised us on Speech Day. I point out that I cannot discuss my colleagues with them, and that I do not share the counsels of the powers that be. I often wonder if they are satisfied. The final question I have to answer is: "Why can't we have another ramble next Saturday?"

but several assured me that they found, after a time, the children mended them. Most of the teachers, however, were agreed that if they had had the selection of books, many they now use would be eliminated.

(12) That the P.N.E.U. methods, like most others, will be successful in the hands of teachers who have faith in them. The success achieved in Gloucestershire, so far as it has been achieved, was undoubtedly due to the enthusiasm and faith of the teachers. I do not find a single school in which there was not considerable faith, particularly on the part of head teachers.